Of Tupperware and Alternate Realities

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Of Tupperware and Alternate Realities

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Summary

Will's called and asked to go in to consult about the Tooth Fairy, he decides he need to talk to Hannibal first if he's going to wrap his mind around the case. The conversation they have unfolds into something he wasn't quite expecting and has nothing to do with the case.

Notes

1) Transcribed from a roleplay taking place in July 2015
2)This is one shot, the rest will posted in order in the series, so please sub to the series.

Will --not to his own hindrance, because really he did try-- showed up a few hours later at the BSHCI, after his chat with Hannibal on twitter, of all things. Sighing at the sign before walking in, he'd told Molly he had business errands to run, not a complete lie, but when had he started to lie to her? Now, he started now.

He was let in, given a pass, and he took his glasses off before being buzzed through into Lecter's cell, which was a remodeled room with nice lighting, books... it wasn't even like a cell at all.

"One might think you were staying at a B&B."

Lecter turned around to see Will after listening to his voice first, savoring it like he would the smell of a glass of wine before drinking it. He looked almost the same as ever, still fit and trim, dramatically good-looking with aristocratic features at odds with the jumpsuit he wore.

"Good afternoon, Will," he said, and walked closer to the glass with a smile in his eyes. "Yes, Frederick thinks this was his idea."

"Good afternoon, Doctor Lecter," Will replied, back, taking in the sight of Hannibal, with a sigh. His hair cut they fit him with only made to make his features highlighted, which was, to say, distracting. "I'm sure he thinks keeping his prized animal happy is in his best interests."

"Are we no longer on a first-name basis?" Hannibal asked, with a raise of his eyebrows. His hair had more silver in it now, as though despite his elegant demeanor, there was an emotional cost to the change in his life, something that had shocked the light brown from his hair.

Will let go of a heavy sigh, deeply, and took only a step closer to the cage, the sturdy plastic keeping them apart, and maybe that was a *good* thing. He'd never been very clear headed with his actions around Hannibal.

Will was leaner, but more muscled, living higher up in the mountains, closer to a river, and he did chores daily, repaired boat motors for locals. Nothing fancy, but it had made him more hands on than he had ever been. Hair still kept with sweeping curls, face bearing the scars of years ago.

"Should we ever have been?"

"Oh, likely not," Hannibal said as he admired the little changes in Will through the glass. "I must admit, Mr. *Foster* , suburbia has put some color in your cheeks. One might get the impression you have retreated further into the wild from your looks."

Will rolled his eyes at his name. He used it as a means to escape attention and media. It was much easier, and yet somehow, Hannibal still found him. "We don't live in the suburbs."

"No, you would not last more than a week amid the hazy sound of all that lawn-mowing and car-washing," Hannibal said, looking Will over like he was cataloging and memorizing him, then looked at his eyes again. "Not to mention Tupperware parties."

"You sound knowledgeable on the topics," Will mused, almost bitterly.

Will ignored the way Hannibal seemed to size him up, not unlike every other time they'd been together, or reunited. Truth was, he was here for information, for help, and it was Will trying to get up the courage to come here that had him talking to Lecter at all.

Now he was wishing he'd never told Jack he'd do this.

"Many of my former patients came to me, highly disillusioned with the paradise," Hannibal explained and watched Will, closely. "You seem nervous, Will."

"Seeing you sets my nerves on edge," Will admitted, eyes meeting Hannibal's, though he was regretting that too. Hannibal had always made him comfortable, and yet on the edge of his seat at the same time, much like prey that was kept as a pet.

"That wasn't always true. You used to come to my house when sleep eluded you, hardly the habit of the nervous to run to what intimidates them," Hannibal said, pacing slowly.

"That was before I knew what you were," Will whispered, eyes watching the room around them, sure he was half asleep now, because it didn't seem real to be here. "It's been a long time, Hannibal."

Hannibal didn't flinch when Will said that, just looked back at him. "It has. I had hoped you would visit."

It had been years, maybe too many, maybe not enough. Will swallowed, taking that last step forward until he was right up to the cell wall.

"Been a little busy."

"With boat motors? Or something else?" Hannibal asked, with a swallow.

"Boat motors, fishing, the dogs, raising a family," he said, through a tight jaw, glasses still in his right hand, holding them like he was ready to shield himself.

"It sounds lovely," Hannibal said, dryly. "Why have you come?"

"Surprised you don't know," Will said, though he'd never admit he came on his own curiosity, but he had Jack's favor of him at his back, as a means out.

"I can only guess," Hannibal said, coldly now, his dark eyes going shiny and much cooler.

"Jack wants my help on this... Tooth Fairy. I.. can't do it without you." Will hated to admit that, but Hannibal had always been the one to bring the best of his abilities out of him.

"Of course you can, Mr. *Foster* ," Hannibal said, coldly.

It was clearly not what Hannibal wanted to hear from Will, he wanted a personal connection, he wanted what they had, and for Will to admit he'd missed him.

Will knew that, because he *knew* Hannibal. All too well.

"Hannibal..."

"Asking someone to work for free, particularly one who is incarcerated smacks of exploitation." Hannibal paced, and looked back at Will, from his full height. "What is offered by Mr. Crawford in return for my labor?"

"Don't you think you get enough privileges here?" Will asked with a snarl, the tone Hannibal was using with him wasn't unusual, but it did strike a chord in his chest. He let out sigh, leveling Hannibal with a gaze back. "I'll ask. He didn't mention anything."

"Thank you," Hannibal said, with a frosty, formal tone and a dark look at Will. "Some information on the crimes at hand would be helpful, as well."

"Murders, not crimes. Whole families are dead," Will said, compassionately, as he always has and will be to stop people from dying.

"Families are, I expect, a rather sensitive subject for you, now that you have one. Is that why you decided it was worth it to tolerate me again?"

Will swallowed and didn't look at Hannibal, it always felt like rejection to see *that* particular look on his face. It made the phantom pains in his stomach rise to the surface. and the scar on his head throb. "You're the only one that can help."

"How fortunate, then, that you knew where to find me," Hannibal muttered, and sat behind the desk in his cell, giving Will a hard stare. "Just *imagine* if I were at large, all those poor families."

"You made your own choices," Will said, one hand lifted toward the see through wall between them, but Hannibal had backed off, he'd put up his walls, not that Will could blame him. "I'll talk to Jack. Any requests?"

"A view," Hannibal said, shortly, looking at Will through the glass like he was a movie, or a stranger, no warmth in his dark eyes at the moment. "I'd like to see the sky again, some water, trees.."

Letting out a huffed laugh, short and unbelievable sounding, Will licked the inside of his teeth, shaking his head with disbelief. "I... will ask him," he said slowly. "Should he not compromise?"

"We'll discuss that further when I have his answer," Hannibal said, his eyes lingering for a flicker of a moment on Will's ring, then away.

"I'll call him," Will said, taking phone from his pocket, and then leaning back toward the door he came in from, trying to see if he could get some service in here. Jack wouldn't be thrilled he went there without him.

"If you stand nearest the door, you will get a better signal," Hannibal said, standing to select a book from his small library.

"Thanks," Will sighed, moving over a few steps, and finally it started to ring. He watched Hannibal carefully, realizing it *had* been a terribly idea to come here.

Would he ever stop feeling bad for a man who murmured dozens upon dozen of people?

Hannibal sat at his desk again, and began to read something German as Jack picked up the phone on the other end of Will’s call.

"Will?"

"Hey. He wants a view. Trees and stuff," Will said, quietly, into the phone, eyeing Hannibal from the side of his eyes.

Jack paused for a moment, confused. "Will, are you *talking* to Hannibal? Alone?" he asked, surprised.

"Yes." Will sighed, waiting for the outrage. "It's proving to be uneventful."

There was a moment's silence, like Jack was gathering his composure. "I didn't mean you should go down there and talk to him right *now* , alone ... " Jack said with a lowered voice as Hannibal turned a page.

"What's he going to do, Jack? He's in there, I'm out here. I've got this. I'm relaying his requests to help us."

"You know damn well Hannibal is dangerous, even when he doesn't have anything sharp in hand," Jack reminded Will with a sigh. "Okay, okay, he wants a ... view? A window? That'd be some major money to move him somewhere. I'd have to talk to a lot of people, I can't okay that today, it could take weeks."

"I know that better than anyone," Will sighed, and looked over at Hannibal. "I'll tell him." Will hung up, and walked back over toward the wall separating them. "Jack said he has to

talk to some people. He'll get back to us."

Hannibal arched an eyebrow, but set his book down, politely, and looked at Will again, quietly. "He had nothing to offer when he sent you?"

"No," Will said, chewing the inside of his cheek, trying to keep a straight facade over himself so Hannibal can't find the cracks to cast his darkness into. "I came on my own. I haven't seen Jack yet."

"You implied that you came on Jack's behalf," Hannibal said, quietly, holding Will's gaze through the glass with the slightest tilt of his head, which sent shadows pooling under his high cheekbones.

"Jack asked for my help. I'm supposed to meet him later. I came early. I didn't want our first meeting to be with Jack at our backs," Will admitted, car,Hong Hannibal's eye this time, and stepped up to the glass.

Hannibal stood, smoothly, and stepped toward the glass, looking back at Will. "I've mistaken your shrewdness for sincerity before, if you remember," Hannibal said, guardedly.

"I do," was the only answer Will gave, and watching Hannibal with interest, and placed his hand on glass.

It was a bold gesture, and one he didn’t think out first. Too late.

Hannibal looked at Will's palm against the glass, and bit the edge of his lower lip, focusing first on the callouses on Will's hands, the tiny scars from fishhooks, a few new ones of various ages.

And the ring, of course, the solid, yellow-gold ring.

"Yellow gold doesn't suit you, in my opinion. I take it you picked it out in a hurry? It was the first or second one you tried on?"

"It fit," Will said, lowering his hand, gesture gone, message from Hannibal received. He was spiteful, just as Will had been when he met Molly.

"Nothing special, but it'll do," Hannibal murmured, meaning more than the ring. "How old is her son?"

Will narrowed his eyes, but didn't comment. "He's ten. The dogs love him."

Hannibal nodded, the spite gone from his eyes for a moment. "I'm sure he's very fond of you, and all the dogs. It must be a wonderful life for a boy his age. What's his name?"

"Wally." Will shrugged.

Hannibal sighed, and stood closer to the glass again, looking at Will. "I trust your new home has a stream that flows near it? Perhaps a lake?"

"Yes. Would I be anywhere else?"

"It would be difficult to imagine," Hannibal said with a sigh. "Tell me, Will, did you ever recover your boat from Italy's shores?"

"No. I Ieft NOLA there along with everything else that went with it," Will said, having sold the boat from overseas. It wasn't really worth the memories or how he'd gotten to Hannibal.

"A shame," Hannibal said, sincerely. "I would have liked to have seen it."

Will let out a long sigh through his nose. He'd wanted Hannibal to see the boat he worked so hard on, that he sailed for months in to reach him. It had meant something then, but hadn't by the time they'd gotten back to wolf trap.

Will had been exhausted and tired of the games. Tired of getting hurt, physically and mentally. "There's pictures."

"I'd love to see them," Hannibal said, the warmth starting to creep back into his eyes.

Will pulled out his phone again, giving Hannibal a knowing look, and flitted through the pictures to find the ones he'd kept from when he first finished the boat, right before leaving. He held it up so Hannibal could see through the glass.

Hannibal stepped closer to the glass and looked at the boat with a little smile, like he was seeing Will's real child. "She is beautiful. You must have worked very hard."

"I didn't have much else to do in recovery," Will said, quietly, jaw tense, but his body language was relaxed. He flipped to another picture, one that Alana had taken with him and the boat, though there wasn't a hint of a smile on Will's face there, just an on going haunt of depression in his eyes.

Hannibal's fingers touched the glass, reflexively, and his eyes mirrored Will's in the photo when he looked at it. "To whom did you sell it?"

"Some Italian. He was a collector of boats and ships. I'm sure he doesn't sail it," Will explained, shrugging, and showed Hannibal a few other pictures, mostly the interior.

"How long did it take you to cross the Atlantic?" Hannibal asked, softly, looking at the photo like he was memorizing it.

"Roughly seven or eight months." Will showed one more, with the dogs on the boat, even if they didn't get to go with him.

Hannibal smiled a little more at that, looking at the dogs, counting them quickly. "Can you believe I miss them too, Will?"

There was a soft knock at the door behind Will, and a young, good-looking male nurse looked in.

"Oh, sorry, didn't know you had a guest. Just wanted to tell you I'm starting my shift, I'll be here for the next 24, Doctor Lecter," the man said.

"That's wonderful to hear, Barney, thank you."

Will had opened his mouth to say something about the dogs, perfectly reminiscent right now, but instead pocketed his phone and gave the nurse a shifted gaze, eyes steely and hard, but said nothing.

Barney nodded with a smile, and closed the door, leaving Will and Hannibal alone again.

"That's Barney, a nurse here. He's endeavoring to attend medical school soon. In the quiet hours, we speak about what to expect from his studies."

"That's very thoughtful of you to keep him occupied," Will said, with a heavy, inward sigh. "Can't say you're too bored in here."

"I think you would know better than to presume that much," Hannibal said with a soft shrug of his wide shoulders. "But as you said, we have all made our choices."

"I only meant that at least you have things and people to occupy your time. Most don't get the privilege."

Most inmates were treated horribly, and as patients, not as... a guest behind bars.

"I assure you, I have worked for all of this. For every necessity here, I have sold a little of my past to Alana and Frederick, bit by bit, whittling away at what is worth trading in for some comfort," Hannibal said.

It frustrated Alana to no end, of course, that Hannibal refused to mention Will. At all.

"He is nothing if not a great bargainer," Will said, shaking his head, pacing a little in front of the glass. It was difficult to talk to Hannibal so close and not be able to actually feel his heat. "Though I am sure you have given him nothing great enough to make money from."

"As I said, I've only parted with parts of my past I find worth the necessities of life," Hannibal said, and looked behind him at his cell."When Frederick writes about me, I will not see a dime of any sales. I consider this my compensation."

"You gave him enough to finish his book, though I'm sure it's not enough," Will said, with an amused tone to his voice that lilted over parts of his accent that he tried often to hide.

Hannibal smirked a little at that, a gleam in his eyes, looking at Will, able to smell his skin through the large holes in the glass. "No, and what a shame that is, but the psychiatric process is notoriously slow, and I am such a *difficult* case," Hannibal said. "Still wearing that old aftershave, Will? Or is that insect repellent, it's difficult to tell..."

Will's eyes flit over to Hannibal's, giving him a knowing smile that grew over his stubble covered face. He rolled his eyes at Hannibal. "Yeah. I've got so much of it left that it seemed a waste to get rid of it."

"It quite literally brings tears to my eyes," Hannibal sighed. "And not because I miss it," he teased, wrinkling his sensitive nose, but he couldn't help but smile.

"You're lucky I can't touch you," Will said, the words slipping out of his mouth, when what he meant was 'punch you', but he it was too late to take them back.

Hannibal caught the slip, and stared at Will, knowingly. "Yes, I feel so much safer from you here, thank goodness *you're* behind glass."

"I could be very dangerous, Doctor Lecter," Will said with a smirk that didn't quite reach his eyes, more because it seemed he was afraid to let any true emotions emulated his life right now. He felt like he was betraying Molly just being here.

"I am only too aware of that," Hannibal said, with a serious nod, staring into Will's sea-colored eyes. "As Dr.Cordell discovered, you are a dangerous creature to underestimate."

Will grimaced a little at that memory. He'd been one hundred and ten percent done with everything at that point, and if he was going to die, he was not going to let it be without some bite back. Literally. "I don't think it was me who was underestimated, Hannibal."

"He leaned too close, and tried to touch you, convinced you were a dog, and not a wolf," Hannibal murmured. "I suspect too many in your life make that mistake."

"A wolf can only be wounded so many times before it will fight back," Will said, though he hadn't been able to fight that night, taking a chunk out of Cordell was most satisfying.

"Very true," Hannibal said, as he stared at Will, admiring him. "You've let your hair grow, a little."

"It covers most of the scars," Will said, looking up at the tufts of curls that draped over his forehead, covering the place Hannibal had tried to saw into him.

"Scars have the power to remind us that the past was real," Hannibal said, looking at Will. "And that we survived it. I imagine when you push your hair back, it keeps people away better than your glasses did."

"It's like being Harry Potter," Will said, knowing this reference with great ease these days since he had a young child at home who adored the books and movies. "Cursed."

"I've been meaning to read those," Hannibal murmured with a little smile, and looked at Will's forehead again. "If I had been able to take you to a hospital, I could have made the scar nearly invisible."

"I'll bring them to you if you are really interested," Will offered, sure he could tug a few books from Little Will's arms hands for a while. "Well, Cordell made it as good as he could, but I guess he was going to fix it up more once he had my face taken off."

"More than likely he was planning a revision, which is still possible, if you really detest the reminder," Hannibal said.

The door opened, and Barney brought Will a cup of coffee, the way he usually drank it, which Hannibal nodded his thanks for, and the nurse stepped out again.

Will took the cup, with a thank you, and then turned back to Hannibal to sip it, just enough sugar, no cream. He gave his friend a pointed look. Finally, Will took up one of the offered chairs there and sat down.

"No point. Like you said, it's a reminder of what was."

"In a strange way, it suits you. Some people do not have enough symmetry and presence to carry off a scar," Hannibal said, and brought his own chair to the glass to sit near Will. "You do."

"It's not a life altering presence on my face, it's just there." As if Hannibal had put a bit of himself inside Will, to stay there, and never let him go, now matter how hard Will tried.

"I do regret giving you that scar," Hannibal admitted, very quietly. "I had planned to revise it, to erase it for you..."

Will leaned his booted foot up against the glass, tilting his chair back a little, keeping it balance, which was more than he could say about any other part of him right now.

"Sadly, at the moment you did it, all I wanted was for you to *do* it. Maybe it was the drugs, I dunno."

"I was desperate for a solution," Hannibal said, and looked at Will with a hard swallow. "To our zero-sum game."

"That's a game neither of us can or will ever win. And it's just that, Hannibal, a game. If we wanted to be serious, we'd have to be honest, and stop playing games all together. Where's the fun in that?"

"Honesty is difficult, sometimes," Hannibal said, looking at Will."Particularly when the weight of it may destroy a connection even more quickly than a game."

"The connection has been severed for several years now, Hannibal," Will said, though he didn't quite believe that himself.

"Has it, Will?" Hannibal asked, with a softer gaze.

Heel pressed into the glass, Will sipped the cup of coffee as he folded one arm over his chest, assessing Hannibal quietly for a moment. No, the connection was just... buried. "Remains to be seen."

Hannibal looked at Will's feet against his glass, something he'd consider highly rude from anyone else, but he had to admit, he liked the sign that Will felt at home with him. "One of the laws of thermodynamics is that energy cannot be destroyed, only transformed. What is a connection but an exchange of energy?"

It was rude, but Will had long not cared if something was rude to Hannibal or not. He had little fear of dying at his hand, especially right now."Sounds tiring."

"If it is an intense connection, it could be," Hannibal said, recalling Will's face back in Wolf Trap. "But intense connections are also the most resistant to extinction."

Will had been exhausted those years ago, in Wolf Trap, where Hannibal had nursed him back to consciousness after their ordeal with Mason. He likely should have thanked him, but he had been just so, so *done* at that point. He was *tired* , and tired of being *tired* .

"Takes a little more than a pair of scissors to cut steel."

Hannibal's dark eyes held a hidden smile. He was trying to be distant with Will, and failing. "Or the blade of a knife, or bonesaw."

Will took another sip of the hot coffee, eyes flitting just over the edge, and then met Hannibal's, which sent a shiver down his spine. "Like a kicked puppy who doesn't know any better, I just keep coming back."

"Do you, or do I?" Hannibal asked, honestly unsure at this point.

"We've always blurred into one person, so I don't think it matters at this point," Will murmured, setting the now empty cup down at side of his chair.

"No, I don't suppose it does anymore," Hannibal sighed, watching Will move. "But then again, you blend like watercolors, into everyone around you."

"An unfortunate attribute to my empathy." Will took pieces of people home with him from crime scenes. It was one reason he didn't consult for Jack anymore, until now. He'd be different once all this was said and done.

"Do you fear blending with this new killer?" Hannibal asked.

"There is always a chance if we can't catch him fast enough." Will was honest about it, and he didn't want to do it at all, he knew he'd go home a different man, and possibly someone Molly and her son couldn't love.

"You fear bringing your work home," Hannibal said, almost able to read Will's thoughts.

"I fear..." Will shrugged, gesturing a hand, "what they will think of me. Because it's not me."

"It's not?" Hannibal asked, and raised one eyebrow. "You are certain they will find a version of you difficult to tolerate?"

"No, it's not. I'm not a..." Will was going to say murderer, or a killer, but that wasn't exactly true either. "I wanted to leave that life behind."

"And you're sure that their esteem won't withstand your change? No matter what the reason?" Hannibal asked, knowingly.

"I'd like to think they are resilient, but I know too well the sort of people that don't want anything to do with someone like me. Like I *can* be."

"That's remarkably conditional," Hannibal said, with a sigh.

Will sighed, scratching at the stubble growth under his chin, a nervous tick. "Hmn."

Hannibal watched the familiar gesture, and smiled, a little. "You can always be whomever you want around me."

Whatever choices he made, he was left with them now, not necessarily stuck, but that's how it was. If he had chosen Hannibal, things would have likely just been constantly on the run, and he was too exhausted back then to even think about that. Let alone leaving his dogs for good.

"I know. And that scares me."

"Why?" Hannibal asked, his eyes looking darker than usual when he tilted his head, just so.

"Because it's a comfort I haven't let myself know in a long time. I... fear getting too comfortable and not being able to go home in the end. Of being restless." Will had just settled into his bones, at a pace that was moderate for his personality, and had gotten accustomed to Molly and Willy, adapting to their needs, to all of them. They had a harmony now; it took work, but it was there.

"Of realizing that Will Foster is simply another facet, as changeable and fluid as any of the darker parts of you," Hannibal's said, like he was reciting the contents of Will's thoughts, aloud. "That when your wife realizes that, she will leave you."

Will was an adapter, he aimed to please, and when he didn't want to, he isolated himself, all while telling himself he wanted a family, and children… It was unethically wrong to the sort of person he was, to take on the burden of someone else and their child, and try to play a part he knew nothing about.

"When did this become a therapy session, Doctor Lecter?"

Hannibal smiled at Will, one leg crossed over the other, as elegant in his prison suit as he was in couture plaid. "An old habit. I have missed your mind."

Will leaned forward, feet off the glass wall, and pressed his elbows into his thighs, hands clasped, a friendly gesture of closeness.

As close as they could be.

"Just my mind?"

Hannibal mirrored Will on the other side, staring at him.

"That would be like asking if I only missed a single building in Florence."

"I wish I could say I missed Florence," Will chuckled, a smile creeping over his features, wrinkling his brow, into his scar there. "But I hardly had the time to enjoy it."

"I wish I had been able to show it to you," Hannibal said, softly, with genuine regret in his voice.

Will sucked in a breath, and let it back out slowly, shakily, twisting his hands together. "No going back now."

Hannibal watched Will's hands, and then looked over his hair, his face, back to his eyes. "Perhaps not."

"You say that like it's just for now," Will said, able to read Hannibal quite easily, even after three years apart, he *knew* Hannibal.

Hannibal smiled a little, sadly. "I've been left with time to think. I believe there are more chances in the universe than most people know of," Hannibal said, thinking of the conversation he'd had with the other, younger Will.

"Other... universes, alternate times?" Will asked, amused, not one to believe in it, but he wasn't one to discredit either. He didn't believe in God, so why not put faith into a something better, something... where those alternates were real.

Another place where Abigail never had to die.

Where Will was never gutted.

Where Hannibal merely said he loved him, instead of... all *this* .

"If you will look at whom I've been speaking to, on Facebook, you may find as much hope there as I have," Hannibal said, mysteriously.

Will was just getting into all of this social media, even if he'd had a Facebook for years now, he was just starting to use it. He raised a brow and sat back in the chair, lifting his hips a little to dig out his phone once more.

"Hold on..."

Hannibal took a deep breath when Will shifted like that, and swallowed, watching him browse. "Earlier today."

Will settled back in and looked around the timeline, and then saw it. A much younger Will, by fifteen years it looked, and he was engaged to... Hannibal. Or another Hannibal. His brows furrowed.

"It's... not a joke?"

"I don't believe so," Hannibal said, watching Will's expression, carefully.

"Clones," Will whispered, darkly, like he didn't believe it. How could someone clone him and he not remember it? It made very little sense.

He browsed some more to find the other Wills he mentioned, one married to Stryder Elessar, the other to Dick Grayson.

Wait... wait a second.

"These other Will Graham's are married to fictional people."

"Fiction in our world may be an echo of reality in the next," Hannibal said. "We may be fiction in some world."

Will's mouth twisted as he looked through people, somehow already friends with these folks, which seemed undeniably strange. "So, in another world, we're getting married, and I'm twenty six and clearly impressionable."

"In another world, yes, we are getting married and you are twenty-six ... with excellent taste," Hannibal said, smirking just a little.

Will canted his head, eyes lifting from his phone to regard Hannibal with an amused smirk. "Jealous?"

"What would it change if I said that I was?" Hannibal asked, after a very long silence.

"Everything or nothing." It was tease mostly, because Will knew Hannibal hated that, unknowns. "Which are you jealous of, this other you or the younger Will?"

Hannibal considered Will, recalling what it was he said earlier, about game-playing. "I am willing to provide an honest answer for that, if you are certain you are ready to hear it."

"I'm tired of us footing around the truth," Will said, knowing that he might be told things he didn't want to hear at this point in his life, but it was better than avoiding the inevitable.

Hannibal shifted his jaw, and nodded, then looked down for a moment, at Will's knees, rather than his eyes, composing himself, all trains of thought heading toward this moment. "In that case, I am certain the truth is obvious, that I am jealous of my other self, very much so. He has achieved a future with you in it, at his side. I was incapable of that."

"We don't know the circumstances," Will offered, not denying what Hannibal said, he could almost feel it. Will sighed hands now clasped in front of him again, pacing in front of his chair. "Do we *now* talk of tea cups and time, and the rules of disorder?" It seemed fitting now, in ways it hadn't back then.

Will was perhaps a little more than tolerable at this point.

Hannibal swallowed and looked down, at his own hands, then up at Will again. "Is it possible you and I are going through the same motions, at different times? Do you hope now that I will forgive the metal around your finger the way I hoped you would forgive the metal against your head?" Hannibal mused, oddly quietly, for him.

He looked up at Will, through the glass. "Are we really, as you put it so long ago ... even Steven?"

Will stood very close to the glass, watching Hannibal. He wouldn't hurt Molly, he wouldn't put her in the middle of this. Not like Alana.

"Maybe I do. Maybe we will never be even. To forgive you, I had to get away from you, away from everything that was you. After you gutted me, I wasn't even angry. I was... depressed. I couldn't get lost in that again."

Hannibal looked up at Will, listening to him before he stood as well, pacing a few steps. "Depression manifests itself very differently in different subjects," he said. "One man drowning in darkness and despair may build a boat to sail out of it, another might surrender to it after months of attempting to outrun the rising tide of his feelings, each action more impulsive and desperate than the last."

"I sailed to find you, to understand you. To find out why you... are who you are, Hannibal." Will hated out easily Hannibal got his guard down, and stepped up to the glass, watching him. "I had to know if I could forgive you for what you had done."

"You sailed half-way around the world to understand me, and once you understood me completely, you drew a blade behind my back," he said, calmly, but sadly. "Betrayal never comes from strangers."

“I had people at my back," Will said, and stepped away from the glass. "Jack wanted you dead. Alana wanted you alive. I... didn't know what I wanted. I was stuck in the middle of their war on you."

"You were unsure whether you wanted me alive, or dead, so you pulled the knife out while my back was turned," Hannibal sighed, sadly. "What were you about to do, Will, had Chiyoh not shot you?"

"Attempt it. Maybe. I had it, just in case. I wasn't sure what you were going to do, I didn't want to go down again not at least fighting for my life."

Will Had been left helpless on many occasions with Hannibal, he didn't want another, even if it had turned out that way anyway.

"You were you going to hurt me mentally or physically. I knew that going in. Part of me just wanted you to finish what you started." Hannibal looked at Will, into his eyes, with great sadness. "I can say, with all honesty, that on that day in Florence, when you found me again in the Ufizi, never had my thoughts been further from violence." Hannibal swallowed, over a dry throat. "I was happy."

"So was I." Which had been why it had been so difficult to do the right thing, to do what Jack had told him. Cut Lecter out.

Will wouldn't have been able to, he would have tried, but it wouldn't have worked,he would have faltered, and Hannibal would kill him anyway.

Hell, he was pretty sure Hannibal had, because he carelessly alive since then.

"Part of me was angry. Part of me relieved. I wanted to slip away with you, so *so* badly."

"It is popularly believed that the definition of insanity is to do the same thing, over and over, expecting a different result," Hannibal said, looking at Will almost the way he'd stared at him in a room full of art, years ago. His presence made all the art in the world uninteresting.

"Twice, I have offered a chance to slip away with me; twice, you have responded the way Jack Crawford wanted you to. Twice, we have both been plunged into misery and pain. Tell me Will, when will you allow yourself to decide what is good for you, and not Jack? Does he remind you of the father you wished you had grown up with? Is he your conscience? Jack is a respectable man, but he cannot tell you what is right for *you* ."

"My conscience tells me that it's wrong to want to run away with you, but my gut--" more like Will's heart-- " tells me otherwise. Jack had been influential. He's always seen me as a project, something he needs to fix because he feels responsible for what you've done to me. Part of me wants to prove him wrong, that he hasn't done anything. That I'm fine."

"That you are ... normal. You are a normal man with a child, and a *wife* ," Hannibal said, with a swallow. "The figure of Jack as a judge of your strength, your fitness for a normal life looms large in your mind. How did you feel when he came to see the life you built? Proud?"

"How'd you know he came to see me?" Will narrowed his eyes a little, no longer pacing, but standing in front of Hannibal, just the glass between them.

Hannibal gave a sad, small smile to Will, and looked at him. "Jack would hardly risk asking so important a favour over the telephone. He'd want to see you, assess you, determine whether or not he thinks you could handle the strain. If you were still living alone, still the fragile teacup, he would never have mentioned it. That is why I imagine part of you swelled with pride that Jack could see the normalcy you have surrounded yourself with. He mistook that for stability."

"I was reluctant to take it, actually," Will retorted, and stood back a few paces on the latter half of what Hannibal said. "You think I'm hiding my instability with a family."

"Aren't you?" Hannibal asked, with a subtle raise of his brows.

Will gathered up his jacket, and put his glasses back on, and took the cup the coffee had be given to him in, going to toss it before he left. "It's nice to know you still think of me as damaged goods."

Hannibal sighed, heavily, and put his fingertips on the glass. "I do not mistake instability for damage, Will. A boat may rock on the waves of a storm, if an automobile moved the same way, it would break it, utterly. You are not as brittle, or as stationary as an automobile. You are a boat, built for storms and high seas. Instability and constant movement is part of your strength."

"Clearly it's not," Will spat out bitterly, sliding the chair back toward the corner of the room where he'd taken it from.

"You can go where Jack and Molly cannot, you are able to leave the flat, dry land of sanity, while they must watch from the shore. Jack fears you may never return, someday," Hannibal said, his heart sinking as he watched Will get ready to storm out. "That is not weakness, that is strength. They have no other words for it but weakness."

Will *hated* that Hannibal knew him better than anyone, that he understood his gift as just that, a gift, even when Will himself wanted to call it a curse.

"Goodbye, Hannibal," he said, walking to the door to be let out. "I'll let you know what Jack says."

Hannibal swallowed hard and removed his fingers from the glass. He could say something provocative, and shocking, just to get Will back from the door, but that sort of desperate grasping at him always led to something ... awful.

He supposed he shouldn't do that, and swallowed, watching Will's retreating back make him feel sick.

"Say hello to Winston and the others for me," Hannibal said, with a sigh.

Will shot a look over his shoulder as he was let out, and nodded, and then disappeared down the corridor and out.

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